

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name Sheep Creek Bridge

Other names/site number 24LC1157/MDT Identification No. L25003005+02001

2. Location

street & number Milepost 5 on Old US Highway 91 (Recreation Road) ☐ not for publication

city or town Two miles south of Wolf Creek ☒ vicinity

State Montana code MT county Lewis & Clark code 049 zip code 59648

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national X statewide X local

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: _____ Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

 entered in the National Register _____

 determined eligible for the National Register _____

 determined not eligible for the National Register _____

 removed from the National Register _____

 other (explain:) _____

Sheep Creek Bridge
Name of Property

Lewis & Clark County, MT
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal
<input type="checkbox"/>	private

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box)

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
	buildings
	sites
1	structures
	Objects
	buildings
1	0
	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Reinforced Concrete Bridges of Montana, 1900-1961

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

3

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/Road-related (vehicular) =
Bridge

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/Road-related (vehicular) =
Bridge

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Reinforced Concrete T-beam Bridge

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: _____

roof: _____

other: CONCRETE

Sheep Creek Bridge
Name of Property

Lewis & Clark County, MT
County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Located in the Wolf Creek Canyon two miles south of the community of Wolf Creek, the Sheep Creek Bridge consists of one contributing structure, a reinforced concrete T-beam bridge built in 1933. The two-span bridge is 64 feet in length and 25 feet wide. It is located on a bypassed segment of US Highway 91 that is now known locally as the Recreation Road. The bridge displays all of the structural features indicative of reinforced concrete bridges designed and built by the Montana Highway Department between 1929 and 1941, including overhanging deck, art deco-style guardrails, and brackets. The setting of the site in the Wolf Creek Canyon has been altered somewhat with the introduction of nearby Interstate 15 in the 1960s, but generally the setting is intact and the site and accompanying road segment still convey the appearance of a 1930s vintage two-lane highway.

Narrative Description

The Sheep Creek Bridge is located at Milepost 5 on the Recreation Road (old US Highway 91) about two miles south of the community of Wolf Creek in central Lewis and Clark County, Montana. The bridge is located in the spectacular Wolf Creek Canyon on an intermittent stream that empties into Little Prickly Pear Creek about 100 feet west of the bridge. The canyon is comprised of Precambrian Belt Formation rocks that are more than a billion years old. The area surrounding the bridge is used primarily for transportation and recreation purposes. The Burlington Northern–Santa Fe Railway Company line (formerly the Great Northern's Montana Central Railway) parallels the Recreation Road to the west. Interstate 15 bypassed this segment of US 91 in 1967.¹

The Sheep Creek Bridge is a two-span reinforced concrete T-beam structure. It is 64 feet in length and 25 feet wide with a roadway width of 22 feet. The bridge consists of two 31-foot spans. The substructure is comprised of two reinforced concrete abutments and backwalls, while the pier is an open hammerhead-type structure. The deck is supported by the standard four lines of reinforced concrete girders that are recessed under the deck. The overhanging deck is partially supported by concrete brackets at the compression joints. The deck is flanked by raised concrete curbs with drains. The curbs are surmounted by the standard double-railed post-and-beam guardrails that are anchored at the ends to flared concrete endposts. The endposts have decorative bush-hammered recessed panels on the interior and exterior sides. The guardrail posts are tapered with beveled caps, while the rails are tilted 45° to provide a canted streamlined appearance.

Integrity

The bridge is the standard reinforced concrete T-beam bridge common to Montana's highways beginning in the 1930s. It retains excellent integrity of design, materials, and feeling. There have been no significant alterations made to the bridge since its construction in 1933.

¹ David Alt and Donald W. Hyndman, *Roadside Geology of Montana*, (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1991), 274.

Sheep Creek Bridge
Name of Property

Lewis & Clark County, MT
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering

Transportation

Period of Significance

1933-1961

Significant Dates

1933

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Montana Highway Department

Robert Boomer and Evarts Blakeslee

Period of Significance (justification)

The Period of Significance for this site encompasses the year the bridge was construction and the time it functioned as a component of US Highway 91 in southwest Montana.

Criteria Consideratons (explanation, if necessary)

Sheep Creek Bridge
Name of Property

Lewis & Clark County, MT
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Sheep Creek Bridge is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. The bridge is eligible under Criterion A because of its association with the make-work New Deal programs of the Great Depression and the Montana Highway Department's attempt to modernize the state's roads utilizing federal funds available from that program. The bridge is also significant under Criterion C as an intact example of the highway department's standard reinforced concrete T-beam structure built between 1929 and 1941. The bridge retains all of its original components and features and is an excellent representative of the type.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

The Sheep Creek Bridge can be listed on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the Montana Highway Department's road and bridge programs during the New Deal of the 1930s. The bridge was part of an extensive program by the highway department to improve and modernize Montana's transportation system utilizing federal funds during the Great Depression. The bridge was constructed under New Deal regulations and represents how the program was designed to maximize labor while minimizing the use of heavy machinery. The bridge is a contributing component of an intact segment of US Highway 91 through the Wolf Creek Canyon north of Helena.

The bridge is also an excellent and intact example of the type of reinforced concrete T-beam bridge designed and built by the Montana Highway Department between 1929 and 1941. The bridge retains the streamlined open appearance standard to all T-beam bridges built during that period. The design also reflects the pervasive Art Deco influence of the 1930s, including the flared endposts, canted guardrails, and overhanging deck. The bridge is an excellent example of the type and is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C.

Engineering Significance

The Sheep Creek Bridge is an excellent example of the standard reinforced concrete T-beam bridge designed by the Montana Highway Department between 1929 and 1941. The standard T-beam design before 1929 was bulky and ponderous with small openings in the guardwalls. The post-1929 bridges, in comparison, were open and streamlined reflecting the Art Deco styling popular during that era. The department intended T-beam bridges to be ubiquitous to Montana's highway system and, consequently, were constructed in great numbers in the 1930s. They were, however, eventually replaced by treated timber bridges to serve in that function as geographic and economic restrictions during the Great Depression forced a modification in the highway program. The Sheep Creek Bridge is representative of state-designed reinforced concrete T-beam bridges built between about 1929 and 1941.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

On 7 November 1932, the Great Falls contracting firm of Boomer and Blakeslee won a contract from the Montana State Highway Commission to build a reinforced concrete bridge and a timber bridge on the Wolf Creek – Sieben section of US Highway 91 in the Wolf Creek Canyon north of Helena. The partners submitted a low bid of \$5,165 for the project; the contract stipulated a completion date for the bridges of 30 June 1933. The Sheep Creek Bridge utilized 101 cubic yards of concrete and 12 tons of reinforcing steel, which was supplied by the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company of Denver. The final cost of the bridge was \$4,725.²

Robert Boomer and Evarts Blakeslee

Born in 1883 in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, Evarts H. "Blake" Blakeslee was long associated with the Montana Highway Department, both as an employee and as an independent contractor. After obtaining a degree in engineering from the University of Wisconsin about 1906, Blakeslee relocated to the Bitterroot Valley of western Montana in 1906 or 1907. There, he worked as a surveyor and contractor on the Bitterroot Valley Irrigation District, a reclamation project designed to promote the cultivation of apple orchards in the valley. After the Apple Boom collapsed in 1917, Blakeslee removed to

² Montana State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes, Book 5, 227, 228 (7 November 1932; Construction File, Project ECHP-FAP No. 269-A, Unit 2.

Sheep Creek Bridge
Name of Property

Lewis & Clark County, MT
County and State

Helena, Montana and began work as a Resident Engineer for the SHC in 1918. Between 1915 and 1926, the Commission assigned Resident Engineers to supervise the construction of large bridge projects in the state. In 1919, the Commission assigned Blakeslee to supervise the construction of the First Avenue North and Tenth Street (HAER no. MT-8) bridge projects in Great Falls. New job opportunities in the Electric City, however, compelled Blakeslee to permanently relocate to Great Falls after the bridge projects were completed in 1921. He resigned from the SHC in 1921 and began work as an independent bridge contractor. Blakeslee's experience with the use of reinforced concrete on the two Great Falls bridges had a profound impact on his subsequent career as an independent contractor.³

While still employed by the SHC in 1920, Blakeslee purchased the seven truss spans of the old First Avenue North Bridge in Great Falls for use at other sites. By 1922, he had gone into business with Angus McGuire, who he had met in the Bitterroot Valley when both men were employed on an irrigation project. McGuire relocated to Great Falls around 1921 and went into business with Blakeslee. The McGuire and Blakeslee company hit the ground running in 1922; that year, the highway commission awarded them contracts to build a bridge in the Gallatin Canyon south of Bozeman and paved one-half mile of city street in Glendive with a roller leased from the commission. The projects established McGuire and Blakeslee as reliable contractors who completed their projects by the deadline specified in the contracts. Between 1921 and 1933 when McGuire left the company, the men built bridges throughout Montana and Wyoming, including the Yellowstone River at Glendive (24DW290) in 1926 and the Missouri River at the community of Hardy (24CA389) in 1931. Both structures were (and continue to be) substantial through truss bridges. For the most part, however, the company built small reinforced concrete slab and T-beam bridges. In 1933, McGuire left Montana for parts unknown.⁴

From 1933 until 1936, Blakeslee was in partnership with Anaconda Copper Mining Company employee Robert Boomer. The company operated under the name of Boomer & Blakeslee. The company built bridges on U.S. Highway 91 between Great Falls and Helena, including the Sheep Creek Bridge (24LC1157) in 1934 and the Prewitt Creek Bridge (24CA642) in 1931. In 1936, Blakeslee dissolved his association with Robert Boomer and formed a partnership with Great Falls area rancher Thomas Staunton to construct road and bridge projects in Montana. The partnership endured as Staunton & Blakeslee until about 1945 when Staunton retired to devote full-time to his cattle ranch. In all his incarnations, Blakeslee was best known for his knowledge and use of reinforced concrete for bridge construction. After the Second World War ended in 1945, Blakeslee formed the Utility Builders Company, a family business that specialized in the construction of curbs, gutters, and pavement in the Great Falls area. Blakeslee remained active in the business until his death in October, 1967 at the age of 84.⁵

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Alt, David and Donald W. Hyndman. *Roadside Geology of Montana*. (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1991).

Axline, Jon. *Conveniences Sorely Needed: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges, 1860-1956*. (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 2005).

Bridge Condition Survey No. 125-0910-0369. Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.

Bridge Inspection Record No. L25003005+02001. Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.

³ "Great Falls Contractor E. H. Blakeslee Dies," *Great Falls Tribune*, 18 October 1967; Robert Blakeslee Interview by Mitzi Rossillon, 3 March 1992; *Polk Directory for Helena and Lewis and Clark County*, (Helena: R.L. Polk, 1918); *Water Resources Survey: Ravalli County, Montana*, (Helena: State Engineers Office 1958), 45.

⁴ There is no record of McGuire in Montana after his departure from Great Falls in the U.S. Census Records. "\$6842 Offered for Iron in Old Bridge Across Missouri," *Great Falls Tribune*, 11 September 1920; *Polk Directory for Great Falls*, (Great Falls: R.L. Polk, 1918-1967); *Third Biennial Report State Highway Commission of Montana, 1921-1922*, (Helena: State Highway Commission, 1923), 54-55, 56-57, 58-59, 62; Butte City Directories, 1900 – 1921; "T. Staunton, Rancher and Businessman, Dies," *Great Falls Tribune*, 9 April 1956.

⁵ Although Boomer had formed a partnership with Blakeslee in 1933, he kept his job at the Anaconda Company plant in Great Falls throughout the period he was associated with Blakeslee. "Great Falls Contractor," *Great Falls Tribune*, 18 October 1967; Blakeslee Interview; *Great Falls City Directories 1949-1967*; "T Staunton," 9 April 1956.

Sheep Creek Bridge

Name of Property

Lewis & Clark County, MT

County and State

Construction File. Project ECHP-FAP No. 269-A, Unit 2. Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.

Great Falls City Directories, 1918-1967. Montana Historical Society. Helena, Montana.

"Great Falls Contractor E. H. Blakeslee Dies." *Great Falls Tribune*, 18 October 1967.

Helena City Directory, 1918. Montana Historical Society. Helena, Montana.

Montana State Highway Commission Meeting Minute Books. Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.

Robert Blakeslee Interview by Mitzi Rossillon, 3 March 1992.

"\$6842 Offered for Iron in Old Bridge Across the Missouri." *Great Falls Tribune*, 11 September 1920.

"T. Staunton, Rancher and Businessman, Dies." *Great Falls Tribune*, 9 April 1956.

Water Resources Survey: Ravalli County, Montana. (Helena: State Engineers Office, 1958).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☒ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: Montana Department of Transportation

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.5

(do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>12</u> Zone	<u>417805</u> Easting	<u>5203020</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary for the Sheep Creek Bridge is a rectangle measuring 64 x 25 feet. The rectangle encompasses the bridge and its approaches on both sides of the creek. The boundary is centered on the bridge.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

Sheep Creek Bridge

Name of Property

Lewis & Clark County, MT

County and State

Boundaries for the Sheep Creek Bridge are drawn to encompass the three spans of the bridge, its immediate approaches and that portion of the creek spanned by the bridge. The width is increased beyond the measurements of the structure to include the pier and abutments.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jon Axline/Historian

organization Montana Department of Transportation

date November 13, 2009

street & number 2701 Prospect Avenue

telephone (406) 444-6258

city or town Helena

state MT

zip code 59620-1001

e-mail jaxline@mt.gov

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

(See Continuation Sheets)

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Montana Department of Transportation

street & number 2701 Prospect Avenue

telephone 406-444-6200

city or town Helena

state MT

zip code 59620-1001

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Sheep Creek Bridge (24LC1157)

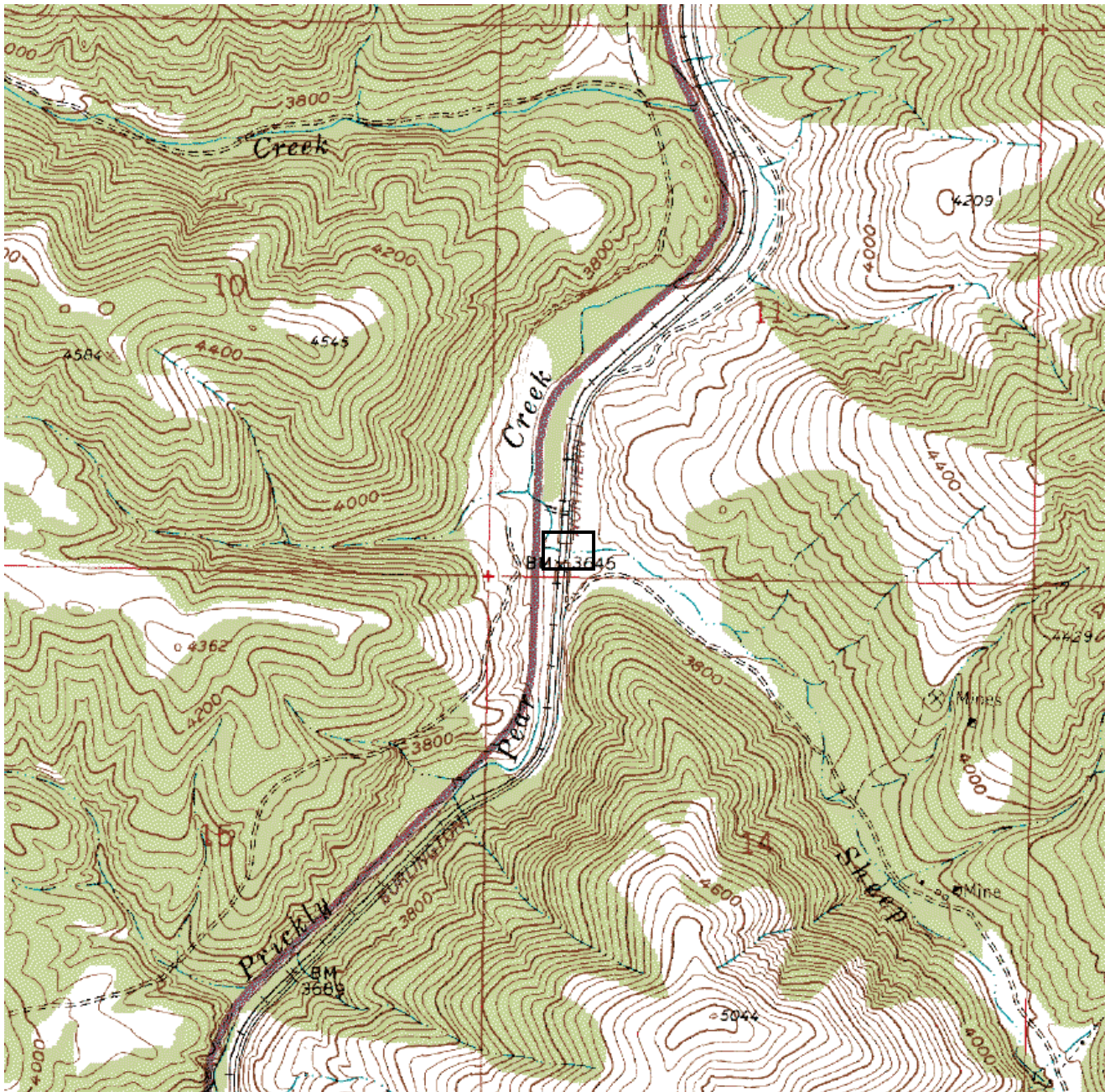
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Reinforced Concrete Bridges of Montana,
1900-1961

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Location of Sheep Creek Bridge. Found on the Sheep Creek, Montana (1962) 7.5' Quadrangle map (photorevised 1979).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Sheep Creek Bridge (24LC1157)

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Reinforced Concrete Bridges of Montana,
1900-1961

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photographs

Page 1



Name: Sheep Creek Bridge (24LC1157)
County and State: Lewis and Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Kristi Hager
Date of Photograph: 2005
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.
Description and view of camera: West profile. View to northeast.
Photograph: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_SheepCreekBridge_0001